

Language Change and the Use of the Particle *Shi*: Meta Linguistic Comments of Japanese Native Speakers

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Introduction

Previous researchers have argued that the particle *shi* used at the end of an utterance seems to work similarly to sentence final particles marking the speaker's epistemic and/or affective stances (Sakakibara, 2008; McGloin & Konishi, 2010; Kondo, 2012). Moreover, in conversations among teenagers and early 20s, more extended and innovative uses of particle *shi* are observed: Question Word + *da* + *shi*, (Sakakibara, 2008), Imperative + *shi* and (Yamamoto, 2012), and Plain form + *na* (imperative of negation) + *shi*. Through analyzing the interviews, the present study aims to investigate how Japanese native speakers in their late teens and 20s perceive the innovative uses of the particle *shi*.

The Innovative *shi*

Innovative Uses of the Particle <i>shi</i>	Example
QW + <i>da</i> + <i>shi</i>	<i>Seechi tte doko da shi!?</i> (Sakakibara, 2008, p. 37)
Imperative + <i>shi</i>	<i>Hayaku ike shi.</i> (Yamamoto, 2012, p. 163)
Plain form + <i>na</i> + <i>shi</i>	<i>Monkichi ni kiyasuku chikayoru na shi.</i> Retrieved from nekoyazi4231's post on Instagram at www.instagram.com/p/B8c4XyIKH/ on February 12, 2020)

Although the previous research indicated the acceptability of the innovative uses of the particle *shi* among “young” people, the functions of these innovative uses have not been fully explored. Moreover, as these uses are associated with “young” people, these uses seem to index social identity which in turn expands the meaning of the particle *shi*. Thus, it would be necessary to investigate the indexical and social meanings of the innovative *shi*.

Indexicality

Study	Key Concepts
Ochs (1992)	Direct indexicality and indirect indexicality; linguistic feature → stance → social identity
Silverstein (2003)	Indexical order; $n + 1^{\text{st}}$ order indexicality = n^{th} order indexicality + ideologies & metapragmatics
Eckert (2008)	Indexical field; any social meaning is not static but has a set of potential meanings

Since the meanings of the innovative uses of the particle *shi* have not been fully explored, it is crucial to analyze the interactional contexts in which these uses are used, the character types that are associated with these uses, and metapragmatic comments on these uses.

Research Questions

1. In what context are the innovative uses of the particle *shi* used?
2. What are the functions of the particle *shi* when it is used with question words + *da*, verb imperative form, and verb plain form + *na*?
3. What are the social meanings of the particle *shi* with question words + *da*, verb imperative form, and verb plain form + *na*?

Data and Methodology

- 12 participants (19 years old to 29 years old; from Kanto area)
- Semi-structured interviews in pairs (online; video-recorded)
- Theme analysis (Ritchie, et al., 2003)
- In Vivo coding and Focus coding (Saldaña, 2016)

Theme 1: Joking

まっでもやっぱ冗談を言う時？ちょっと含んだ感じ。ちょっと笑
いー，ユーモアを加えたい時とか (Chika, 25 years old, female)
(well actually, when saying jokes? It (the utterance) has a hint (of joking tone). When you want to add a bit of laughter or humor.)

One of the reasons why the speaker of the innovative uses would like to add a joking tone could be that the grammatical structures of QW + *da*, imperative form, and plain form + *na* sound blunt by themselves. Moreover, the innovative uses are used to counter the interlocutor's utterances when the interlocutor teased or made fun of the speaker.

高校生でー，なんかからかわれてる時。なんか，「お前あの子のこと好きなんだろう」，みたいな。「やめろし」っていう，言いそう。
(Kiko, 28 years old, female)
(When a high school student is being teased (by their friend). Like, “You like that girl, don't you?”. And, (they) most likely say, “Yamero shi (Stop it shi).”)

Theme 2: Soft; Weak

なんかちょっと，「言うな」とか「やめろ」とか命令口調じゃないですかー。だから強い感じがする？なんてんだろ，響きが。でも「し」つけて柔らかくはなる (Kiko, 28 years old, female)
(Well, “Don't say” and “Stop it” and the like have imperative tone, don't they? So it feels like (they sound) strong? How should I say, the sound. But by adding *shi*, they become soft.)

The participants in this study perceive one of the functions of the innovative uses of the particle *shi* as mitigation of the bluntness of the utterance.

Theme 3: Soliloquy

Yasuko, a 21-year-old female, responded that she used the particle *shi* with QW + *da* when she was talking to herself. She also mentioned that she would not use the expression directly toward her interlocutor; that is, the speaker does not have the intention to actively communicate with the interlocutor when using this expression.

友達とかだったら，言わない。面と向かっては，言わない (Yasuko, 21 years old, female)
(I don't say it to my friends. I don't say it to someone face to face.)

Theme 4: Not Proper Japanese

Although participants admitted that they regularly see and hear the innovative uses of the particle *shi*, they still think that these uses are not proper Japanese. Taro, a 20-year-old male, told the author that it is not grammatically correct to use the particle *shi* with a question word. He further stated that those who do use these innovative uses (which he thinks are grammatically incorrect) are “クセ，強い (have a strong character).” His comments seem to indicate that the people who are out of norm would use the innovative uses of the particle *shi*.

Theme 5: Sounding Young

All participants revealed that these innovative uses of the particle *shi* sound young. They also highlighted that these uses are associated with male middle school and high school students.

男子とか使ってそう，高校生とか使ってそうだね。 (Yasuko, 22 years old, female)
(Boys might be using (the innovative *shi*). It feels like high school students might be using (the innovative *shi*), doesn't it?)

20歳ぐらい上の人からなんかこれ来たらちょっとおう，みたいな，若作りしてんな感が (Mami, 23 years old, female)
(If the person who is around 20 years older than me uses this (the innovative *shi*), I'll be like, “oh,” it feels like the person is trying to be young.)

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